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ABSTRACT

Approximately 150 college students participated in a study that investigated the effects of self-concept, self-disclosure, and type of basic speech course on communication apprehension. The subjects were drawn from three basic speech course populations at two universities. They had been free to enroll in either a public speaking, interpersonal communication, or small group communication course. All three courses required oral presentations. After the first week of each course, the subjects were administered a communication apprehension instrument and four separate instruments designed to measure self-concept and self-disclosure. Results showed negative correlations between both self-concept and self-disclosure and communication apprehension. Findings indicated also that the type of speech course did not significantly affect apprehension. (FL)

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THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONCEPT, SELF-DISCLOSURE, AND TYPE OF BASIC SPEECH COURSE ON COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

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THE EFFECT OF SELF-CONCEPT, SELF-DISCLOSURE, AND TYPE OF BASIC SPEECH COURSE ON COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

What effect, if any, does the basic course in speech communication have on individuals found to be highly communication apprehensive? Is there any theraputic value in the basic course which can help to decrease the highly apprehensive student's fear of communicating? Although a number of studies have been carried out to define the parameters of communication apprehension and concomitant variables affecting individual's perceptions or fears of communicating, few studies have examined the impact of the basic course in speech communication on the needs of the highly apprehensive student.

The need for research examining the situational aspects of communication apprehension is magnified when one considers that fifteen to twenty per cent of all students enrolled in basic courses may be highly communication apprehensive (McCroskey, 1970). Of those students diagnosed as being highly communicative apprehensive, 50 to 70 per cent dropped a public speaking course while only five to 10 per cent of students diagnosed as low to moderately communication apprehensive withdrew (McCroskey, 1970). The problem is confounded even further when one considers that there are at least three major lines of treatment (c.f. Glaser, 1982) and that very few institutions have special treatment programs in place to help communication apprehensive students (Daly, 1975; Hoffman and Sprague, 1982). Although there are few treatment programs in place at in our universities, the influence of basic speech communication courses in and of themselves have not been examined for their effect on the highly communication apprehensive student. Since almost all institutions of higher education require at least one course in speech communication prior to graduation the impact of such a course may have profound effects upon the apprehensive student.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of the basic course in speech communication on communication apprehensiveness or fear of communication. Further the study suggests a relationship between the three major lines of treating high communication apprehensive students and type of basic speech communication course. Finally, in order to extend the knowledge in at least one major line of treatment, the study examines the relationship between two intrapersonal variables found to impact on communication apprehension, self-concept and self-disclosure. The former found to be affected by completing the basic speech communication course.

Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension has been defined as a variety of effects, all dealing with a pathological avoidance of communication. As might be expected, the highly apprehensive student is viewed as being afraid to communicate, as being highly anxious about communication, and resulting in an apprehension to communication that is dysfunctionaly inappropriate (e.g., McCroskey, 1970). Additionally, Phillips (1968) has defined communication apprehension as the avoidance, nonparticipation, and subsequent withdrawal from communication due to inadequate skills related to that communication. It seems, however, that communication apprehension might be conceived as a general unwillingness to communicate based on both fear and anxiety and avoidance due to inadequate communication skills. This fear and subsequent avoidance suggests that unwillingness might be considered a trait rather than a state variable,

although McCroskey (1977) suggests that scales designed to measure a desire to communicate may tap the "underlying construct of trait CA" and measure a general predisposition toward communication which may be a function of several variables. Although this distinction may differentiate people in general in regard to their communication apprehension, for those diagnosed as highly communication apprehensive there should be no difference between "unwillingness" and "apprehension" as they will most likely exhibit behaviors associated with anomia and alientation (e.g., Burgoon, 1976).

The suggestion that highly communication apprehensive individuals feel insecure, powerless, and alone--are unwilling to communicate--incorporates both McCroskey's and Phillips' notions of the construct and unifies the perspective in such a way that avoidance and apprehension become synonomous. The use of unwillingness as equated with apprehension rather than as a corollary to it suggests also that communication apprehension is cross-situational.

Treatment of Communication Apprehension

Susan Glaser (1982) suggests that communication apprehension is treated in three different ways or models. Each model suggests that a number of elements are successful in treating the highly apprehensive individual; all however, suggest a similar outcome: the reduction of apprehension and a more willingness to communicate. The three models of treatment seem to follow along pedigogical lines of basic speech communication courses.

Perhaps the most ingrained model in the speech communication field has been the "skills deficit" or skills training model. This approach to the treatment of communication apprehension suggests the underlying problem is based on inadequate behavioral skills that deal with communication. Most public speaking textbooks, for example, suggest that communication apprehension (stage fright) will decrease as competency increases through practice and experience. In treatment programs, however, treatment includes one-on-one instruction, identification and practice of targeted behaviors, and modeling (e.g., Glaser, 1982).

A treatment model that has been extremely popular is the "conditioned anxiety" or "systematic desensitization" approach to reducing communication apprehension. This approach suggests that anxiety has been associated with communication and this same anxiety is conditioned to a general unwillingness to communicate cross-situationally. Relaxation and modification of targeted cognitive stimuli or constructs is then paired with the anxiety-producing stimuli to reduce unwillingness to communicate. In many instances this treatment is approached as group desensitization with all the dynamics of small group processes and communication entwined in the relaxation program (e.g., feeling comfortable with peers, self-disclosing, self-esteem building exercises).

The third treatment model suggests that individuals who are unwilling to communicate hold a negative self-appraisal of their communicative abilities and foster expectations of aversive consequences in communicating with others. This approach treats the apprehensive individual through cognitive modification; through an awareness of self and self-variables the highly communication apprehensive individual's negative self-disclosures and lack of self-reinforcements are modified to produce more normal communication expectancies. Self-reinforcements in this model might be considered as originating in a negative self-conceptualization as a communicator which

yields negative self-disclosures, or the interpretation of what a self-disclosure/description would yield in the most negative way.

The actual treatment of highly apprehensive communicators most likely consists of hybrid versions of the best of all three programs. In her overview and critique of treatment programs Glaser (1982) notes the significant overlap in treatment which comes from any of the models suggested. When one masters a skill, for example, his or her self-concept is enhanced, hence the outcome is a combination of cognitive modification and skills enhancement. When a student has engaged in a group discussion of his or her feelings about communicating and self-disclosing is reciprocated in a positive way that student has learned a skill and probably, over a period of time, will change his or her self-concept toward communication. This overlap of effect suggests that what is done in basic speech communication courses might have an impact on communication apprehension, provided that some form of the treatment or a least an awareness of the problem is identified and outlets provided.

Basic Courses and Communication Apprehension

A recent survey of basic course instructors revealed that across three major courses defined as "basic" (public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication), anywhere from 33 per cent to 49 per cent of the respondents reported devoting significant time to "speech anxiety" (Gibson et al., 1980). This finding suggests that the awareness and need for treatment in basic courses exists across a fairly large section of American institutions. In contrast, however, only about 6 per cent of the institutions responding to a survey on communication apprehension indicated they operated treatment programs (Hoffman and Sprague, 1982). What impact various basic courses in speech communication have on communication apprehension is not very well understood. What we do know, however, has been distilled by Karen Foss (1982): "Communication apprehension traditionally has been dealt with in the regular classroom through progressive oral communication performances designed to teach skills and increase self confidence. Recent research suggests, however, that highly anxious students may be hurt rather than helped by required oral presentations, the assignment of grades for class participation, and the like. (pp. 199-200)"

While Foss' statement may be true of basic courses where the sole impact is the "stand-up-and-speak" class reflective of the late 1960's and beyond, it must be tempered by research that suggests other variables related to communication apprehension have been impacted upon by the basic speech communication course. This is especially true where self-concept or self-esteem has been examined (e.g., Brooks and Platz, 1968; Dieker, Crane, and Brown, 1968; Furr, 1970; McCroskey, 1967). What is true of her statement is that it reflects the predominate examination of students in public speaking courses. Given the Gibson et al. findings one might expect some improvement in highly apprehensive students after completing the basic course.

What we do know of the "different" type of basic speech communication courses and their relationship with communication apprehension is limited. Pearson and Yoder (1979), examining the relationship between perceptions of public speaking and interpersonal communication courses by high communication apprehensive students, found that the interpersonal communication course was perceived as less threatening than the public speaking course. No significant differences between the two courses, however, were obtained for apprehension scores.

Researchers have found that high communication apprehensive students in small group courses talk less and exert less leadership in a group than do non-high apprehensive students (Wenzlaff, 1972; Sorenson and McCroskey, 1977). In basic courses where oral performance is required as a "lab" portion, Powers and Smythe (1980) found significant differences between high and low communication apprehensive subjects on performance evaluation and final course grade. They also found that subjects classified as moderately communication apprehensive also achieved higher evaluations on two of four oral performances than did highly apprehensive students.

In sum, there appears to be a lack of research examining the effect of basic speech communication courses on communication apprehension. What research we do have seems to examine differences between low and high apprehensive students or, as in the case of Pearson and Yoder (1979), found no differences in change scores for apprehension between students enrolled in public speaking and interpersonal communication courses. What needs to be examined, therefore, is the effect such courses have on the pretest to posttest apprehension scores of high communication apprehensive students. This, combined with the findings of Gibson et al. (1980) would suggest that researchers might be interested in examining basic courses which represent oral skills performance (public speaking), interpersonal communication, and small group discussion. These courses seem representative of required courses at many institutions.

Self-Concept, Self-Disclosure and Communication Apprehension

Two variables which have had demonstrated impact on students found to be highly communication apprehensive and, in turn, have been impacted upon by course of study are self-concept and self-disclosure. Both variables, however, are interrelated and the impact of one influences perceptions of the other. In general, a healthy self-concept is associated with appropriate and honest self-disclosure. Researchers examining both variables have concluded that both are related to communication apprehension.

Self-Concept

The relationship of self-concept to communication apprehension may be a major motivational force which influences perceptions of anxiety or fear of communication. We are what we perceive others perceive us to be. This line of thinking reflects Cooley's (1902) notion of the "looking glass self" and subsequent extention to "significant others" (Mead, 1934). This conception of self suggests that individuals will modify how they perceive themselves over time; that the self-concept is in a continual state of change. McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, and Falcione (1977) suggest that the descriptions of the high communication apprehensive individual and the individual with low concept of self are highly similar. They posited and obtained a series of significant negative correlations between communication apprehension and self-concept ($r = -.52$ to $r = -.72$) across a number of different samples of varying ages and occcupational types.

The relationship between self-concept and basic speech communication courses has also been examined. In general, self-concepts have been found to increase after completion of public speaking and interpersonal courses (e.g., Brooks and Platz, 1968; Dieker, Crane, and Brown, 1968; Furr, 1970; McCroskey,

1967; Stacks, 1975) and small group discussion (Crowell, Katcher, and Miyamoto, 1955).

Of interest to the relationship between self-concept and communication apprehension might be impact of the high communication apprehensive student's perception of self-concept as a communicator and that student's perception of ideal self-concept as communicator. Previous researchers have suggested such a relationship between speech communication courses and the discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept concept (e.g., Judd and Smith 1974a). It would seem to follow that the high communication apprehensive student's perception of his or her self-concept and the discrepancy between that perception and ideal self-concept would be positively related to communication apprehension. That is, as the discrepancy between self and ideal self increases, so too will communication apprehension. If a course reduced the discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept it should also modify the individual's perception of communication apprehension.

Self-Disclosure

The relationship between an individual's self-disclosure and communication apprehension, like that of self-concept, should be negatively related. Individuals diagnosed as being highly apprehensive exhibit avoidance and anxiety and tend to withdraw from communication situations. Such individuals would also be less likely to self-disclose to others, would be more hesitant to disclose or even describe their feelings and attitudes. Very little research, however, has examined the relationship between disclosure and apprehension. Hamilton (1972) obtained a significant ($r = -.32$) correlation between self-disclosive communication and highly apprehensive subjects. McCroskey and Richmond (1977) also found differences on four or five dimensions of the Wheeless and Grotz (1975) target self-disclosure measure with highly apprehensive subjects less disclosive on all but depth of disclosure.

McCroskey and Richmond's findings suggest that highly communication apprehensive subjects perceived themselves to be less disclosive toward target stimuli. They did not, however, test for generalized self-disclosure. Nor did they examine the effect of moderately apprehensive subjects. As Powers and Smythe (1980) found, moderately apprehensive subjects do not always differ from either high or low communication apprehensive subjects.

Finally, the basic speech communication courses in interpersonal communication and small group communication tend to treat self-disclosure as a part of course content. One might suggest, then, that the two courses have an impact on a student's perceived self-disclosure which could lead to a reduction in the anxiety or fear felt by highly communication apprehensive students (as would be from a combination of the systematic desensitization and the cognitive modification methods of treatment).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the research examining self-concept, self-disclosure, and basic speech communication courses and their relationships with communication apprehension several hypotheses and research questions can be advanced. From the findings of McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, and Falcione (1977) we would expect to find a significant negative correlation between communication apprehension

and self-concept. Along the line suggested by Judd and Smith (1974a), we would also expect significant negative correlations between ideal self-concept and communication apprehension. Finally, based on the rationale that as discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept increases communication apprehension also increases, we would expect positive correlations between discrepancy and communication apprehension. On the basis of this rationale and previous research the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There will be a significant negative correlation between self-concept and communication apprehension and between ideal self-concept and communication apprehension.

H2: There will be a significant positive correlation between the discrepancy of self-concept and ideal self-concept and communication apprehension.

From the research examining the relationships between self-disclosure and communication apprehension we would expect significant negative correlations between both targeted self-disclosure and communication apprehension and between generalized self-disclosure and communication apprehension. Based on McCroskey and Richmond's (1977) findings, we would also expect that low and high communication apprehensive subjects would differ in their self-disclosures to targeted others. If low and high communication apprehensive subjects differ in their self-disclosures to targeted others (friends, close acquaintances), they should also differ in their self-disclosure to generalized others. What we do not know, however, is the relationship between high and low communication apprehensive subjects and those subjects found to be only moderately apprehensive. Based on earlier findings and this rationale, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H3: There will be significant negative correlations between communication apprehension and both targeted self-disclosure and generalized self-disclosure.

H4: Low communication apprehensive subjects will perceive their targeted self-disclosures as more positive, honest, intentional, with greater depth, and in greater amounts than will high communication apprehensive subjects.

H5: Low communication apprehensive subjects will perceive their generalized self-disclosures as more positive, honest, intentional, with greater depth, and in greater amounts than will high communication apprehensive subjects.

Additionally, the following corollary research question was generated based on the preceding discussion:

Q1: To what extent do moderate communication apprehensive subjects differ from high and low communication apprehensive subjects in their targeted and generalized self-disclosures?

Although it is tempting to suggest that one basic speech communication course is superior in helping high communication apprehensive students reduce their fear or unwillingness to communicate, the research does not support such

an hypothesis. If, as suggested, each basic course tends to approximate one of the three treatment methods elaborated by Glaser (1982), then one might expect each course to be equally effective in treating apprehension. This line of thought would explain Pearson and Yoder's (1975) findings of no difference between apprehension change scores for high communication apprehensive students enrolled in public speaking and interpersonal communication courses. If basic speech courses do have an effect on communication apprehension, it should come in the way each course modifies students' self-concept and self-disclosure. On the basis of this discussion the following corollary research questions were genereated:

Q2: What effect does the basic speech communication course have on high communication apprehensive subjects?

Q3: What effect does the type of basic speech communication course have on high communication apprehensive subjects?

Q4: What effects do basic speech communication courses have on the communication apprehension-related variables of self-concept and self-disclosure?

Method

Subjects

Subjects were students drawn from three basic course populations at two southeastern universities. Subjects enrolled in the courses did so to satisfy the requirements for graduation at both universities and were free to enroll in one or more courses in public speaking, interpersonal communication, and/or small group communication. Initially the subject pool consisted of 207 students.[1] After the completion of the term, however, only 141 subjects remained.

Briefly, the courses selected were similar in content at both universities. Public speaking students were required to make at least three stand-up speeches and the texts used stressed a skills training approach to speaker apprehension or stage fright. The interpersonal communication courses stressed both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels of communication, with stress made on relationships between self-to-self and self-to-others; this course probably best fits the cognitive modification approach to reducing communication apprehension. The small group discussion course stressed an interactive approach to small group communication and included units on personality and cohesion and stressed the interactive impact of members communication. This course fits somewhere between a desensitization and cognitive modification approaches to communication apprehension. In all courses, oral presentations were required.

After the first week of the term subjects were administered the Unwillingness to Communicate instrument developed by Burgoon (1976), the Wheeless and Grotz (1976) targeted self-disclosure and generalized self-disclosure scales (Wheeless, 1978), and two instruments developed by Dieker, Crane, and Brown (1968) which measure self-concept as a communicator and ideal self-concept as a communicator. Students who scored one standard deviation above the total Unwillingness mean (44.1, sd = 8.6) classified as highly apprehensive; students scoring one standard deviation below the mean

were classified as being low communication apprehensive.[2] The same set of scales were administered during the last week of the term. To check against any ordering effect, scales were randomly assembled within each package at both administrations and were either xeroxed or duplicated on purple ditto.

Due to failure to complete the test packet, absence from class at one or the other test administrations, or from dropping the course, only 42 high communication apprehensive subjects remained in the sample (13 in public speaking courses, 24 in interpersonal communication courses, and 5 in the small group discussion course).

Instruments

The short form Unwillingness to Communicate scale was used to assess student communication apprehension. Burgoon (1976) has reported high internal reliability and significantly high correlations between this and other measures of communication apprehension.[3] An internal reliability of .88 for the Unwillingness measure was computed with Cronbach's (1951) Coefficient Alpha.

Self-disclosure was measured by the revised self-dislosure instrument reported by Wheeless (1978) which measures both targeted self-disclosure and generalized self-disclosure. Each instrument consists of five dimensions which tap subjects' perceptions of their self-disclosures. The intent dimension reflects the awareness of an individual's self-disclosures. The positiveness dimension is concerned with whether or not that disclosure reflects positively or negatively on the individual. The amount dimension focuses on the amount of disclosures made by the individual. The honesty dimension is concerned with how closely the disclosure is related to inner feelings of the individual. And, finally, the depth dimension focuses on the degree of control over the intimacy of the disclosure. Wheeless has reported high internal reliabilities for each dimension of both general disclosiveness and the targeted disclosiveness instruments. Coefficient Alpha's for each of the five generalized self-disclosure dimensions were: .83 for intent, .87 for amount, .96 for positiveness, .81 for depth, and .90 for honesty. Reliability coefficients for the targeted self-disclosure measures were: .88 for intent, .90 for amount, .95 for positiveness, .81 for depth, and .89 for honesty. When completing the targeted self-disclosure scales, subjects were told the target of the communication was "a friend." When completing the generalized self-disclosure scales, subjects were instructed to respond to "other people in general."

Self-concept as a communicator and ideal self-concept as a communicator were measured by two sets of scales developed by Dieker, Crane, and Brown (1968). Each measure consists of 12 semantic differential scales which ask the subject to respond to each as "yourself" (self-concept) and as "you would like to be" (ideal self-concept) as a communicator. Because of previous problems with the dimensionality of the two instruments (i.e., Judd and Smith, 1974a, 1974b), responses on the pretest measure were submitted to an oblique solution factor analysis. To be retained factors were required to have at least two items loading at .60 or greater and have no secondary loading greater than .40. An eigenvalue of 1.0 was specified as the initial cut-off for extraction of the principal factor. A two factor solution was obtained yielding identical item structures on both the self-concept as a communicator and the ideal self-concept as a communicator measures (see Table 1 for loadings and interfactor correlations). Reliability coefficients for both dimensions on each measure were above .85.

Analyses

For the purposes of this study communication apprehension was defined as a score on the Unwillingness to Communicate measure. Subjects were classified as being high or low communication apprehensive if they scored greater than one standard deviation above or below the mean Unwillingness score, respectively. Self-concept and ideal self-concept were defined as the sum of scales for each factor on each measure. Self-disclosure was defined as the summed ratings for each dimension on the targeted self-disclosure measure and the generalized self-disclosure measure. Discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept was defined as the absolute value of the differences between self-concept and ideal self-concept for each factor. For some of the analyses change scores were computed by subtracting the pretest from the posttest scores.

Results

Because there existed a possibility that the scores for subjects at the two universities might differ, analyses were performed to check on sample homogeniety of variance. Unweighted analyses of variance were computed for apprehension, the dimensions of targeted and generalized self-disclosure, and each factor of the self-concept and ideal self-concept measures. No significant differences were found for any analysis.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

The first two hypotheses predicted significant correlations between self-concept as a communicator and communication apprehension and ideal self-concept as a communicator and communication apprehension. Tests for these analyses were run on the pretest data across all courses. The results confirmed both hypotheses and are summarized in Table 2. Self-concept and ideal self-concept both were found to be negatively related to communication apprehension ($r = -.42$ to $r = -.14$ $p < .05$). Significant positive correlations were found for the descrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept and communication apprehension ($r = .51$ and $r = .29$, $p < .05$, factors 1 and 2, respectively).

Hypotheses 3, 4, 5, and Research Question 1

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 dealt with subjects' perceived self-disclosure. Hypothesis 3 predicted a negative correlation between dimensions of targeted self-disclosure and communication apprehension and between dimensions of generalized self-disclosure and communication apprehension. Tests for these analyses were run on pretest data across all courses. The results confirmed Hypothesis 3 for all dimensions of targeted self-disclosure and four of the five dimensions of generalized self-disclosure (see Table 2). Only on the dimension depth of generalized disclosiveness was a nonsignificant correlation obtained ($r = -.03$).

Hypotheses 4 and 5 predicted that high and low communication apprehensive subjects would differ in both their targeted and generalized self-disclosures. Partial support for both hypotheses was obtained when scores were subjected to analyses of variance on pretest data. Low communication apprehensive subjects scored higher on all dimensions except depth of self-disclosure for both targeted and generalized disclosiveness measures. The means, F's and R^2's

are reported in Table 3. Taken together, the three hypotheses both support previous research suggesting a negative relationship between self-disclosure and communication apprehension and extends what we know about high and low communication apprehensive subjects' disclosures to more general forms of disclosure.

The addition of the moderate communication apprehensive subject to the analyses lends support to the contention that on some dimensions of self-disclosure moderately apprehensive subjects behave no differently than high or low communication apprehensive subjects. Specifically, for generalized self-disclosure, moderately communication apprehensive subjects did not differ from low apprehensive subjects on the dimensions of amount of disclosure, positiveness of disclosure, or depth of disclosure (which was nonsignificant); in terms of honesty of disclosure, moderate and high communication apprehensive subjects did not differ significantly from low apprehensive subjects (see Table 3). For targeted disclosiveness, the moderately communication apprehensive subjects did not differ from either high or low apprehensive subjects in terms of positiveness of disclosure. Again, for depth of disclosure, no significant difference was found between the three classes of communication apprehension.

Research Questions 2, 3, and 4

Research questions 2, 3, and 4 sought to identify the effects of the basic course in speech communication on communication apprehension and the related variables of self-concept and self-disclosure. The first question was analyzed via a 3 (course) x 2 (time) unweighted repeated measures analysis of variance with time the repeated measure. The dependent variable was the subject's apprehension scores at pretest and posttest. No significant difference was found for either type of course ($F = 1.09$, df/2,39) or the interaction of time and type of course ($F = 0.82$, df/2,39). (The means are reported in Table 4.) A significant difference was obtained, however, for time ($F = 13.27$, df/1,39, $p < .05$) with posttest scores lower than pretest scores (see Table 5).

The third research question sought to find the impact that each of the three basic courses might have on the high communication apprehensive subject's scores. Because the interaction terms of the model was nonsignificant, the data were treated as change scores and tested via correlated t-tests. Significant differences were found in the public speaking course ($t = 2.42$, $p < .05$) and the small group discussion course ($t = 3.07$, $p < .05$). In both instances, pretest communication apprehension scores were higher than posttest scores. Although the interpersonal communication almost met the traditional .05 level of significance ($t = 1.96$, $p < .06$), pretest scores were higher than posttest scores. The means are reported in Table 5.

Supplemental analyses on self-concept and self-disclosure were undertaken to answer Research Question 4. Analyses were completed via the same 3 (course) x 2 (time) repeated measures analysis of variance to test for possible interaction terms. Only an interaction between course and time for the amount of generalized self-disclosure was obtained ($F = 3.38$, df/2,39, $p < .05$). High communication apprehensive subjects enrolled in public speaking and interpersonal communication courses increased the amount of their self-disclosures over the term more so than subjects enrolled in the small group discussion course. A main effect for course also was found for depth of disclosure to a targeted friend ($F = 3.33$, df/2,39, $p < .05$) such that interpersonal and small group subjects disclosed in more depth than did public

speaking subjects.

Further analyses were undertaken by collapsing the course means and treating communication as a change score. Data were analyzed via correlated t-tests (see Tables 4 and 5). Significant differences were obtained for change in the positiveness of self-disclosure on both targeted disclosiveness ($t = -9.44$) and generalized disclosiveness ($t = -2.03$). A significant change in the discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept for factor 1 was also found ($t = 3.70$). For the self-disclosure measures, the change from pretest to posttest indicated more positiveness in subjects' self-disclosures. The discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept as a communicator was reduced from pretest to posttest.

Finally, each course was examined for its impact on high communication apprehensive subjects' self-concept and self-disclosure. Within the public speaking course several significant differences were found on the generalized disclosiveness dimension of amount of disclosure ($t = -2.67$), on the targeted disclosiveness dimension of positiveness of disclosure ($t = -4.22$), the first factor of self-concept ($t = -2.47$), and the change in discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept for the first factor ($t = 5.22$). For the self-concept and self-disclosure dimensions, pretest scores were lower than posttest scores. The discrepancy scores were lower at the posttest than at the pretest.

Within the interpersonal communication course significant differences were obtained for positiveness of self-disclosure on both targeted disclosiveness ($t = -7.80$) and generalized disclosiveness ($t = -2.60$) and change in discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept for the first factor ($t = 2.23$). Again, pretest disclosure scores were lower than posttest scores. For discrepancy, pretest scores were higher than posttest scores. Only the change in positiveness of self-disclosure dimension for targeted disclosiveness reached significance ($t = -3.59$) in the small group discussion course with posttest positiveness greater than pretest positiveness.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the relationship between communication apprehension, self-concept as a communicator, communicator self-disclosure, and type of basic speech communication course. Based on previous research it was suggested that the relationships between self-variables and communication apprehension would be inversely related. That is, as communication apprehension became higher perceptions of self-concept and self-disclosiveness would be reduced. It was also suggested that the discrepancy between how the individual perceives him or herself as a communicator would be positively related. Finally, this study sought to examine the impact that different basic speech communication courses have on both communication apprehension and related self-variables. In so doing it may have answered some questions left by previous research.

Self-Concept and Communication Apprehension

It was suggeted that self-concept may play a large part in understanding communication apprehension. McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, and Falcione (1977) suggested, for example, that low self-conceptualization and high communication apprehension appear highly similar. This study replicated their findings of

significant negative correlations between self-concept and communication apprehension. It further found negative correlations between idealized perceptions of communicator self-concept and communication apprehension. What is most important, however, is the finding that as the discrepancy between how individuals perceive themselves and how they would like to perceive themselves as communicators increases so too does communication apprehension. This suggests a definite area where improvements can be made which might lead to a reduction in communication apprehension.

Because self-concept is easily modified in a variety of contexts it would follow that future research might examine how the different communication courses modify or change initial self-conceptualizations as communicators. It may be that, through skill enhancement alone or the modification of idealized self-concepts and skill enhancement, perceptions of self become less discrepant and in line with "normal" anxieties and fears of communicating with others.

Clearly, the change in discrepancy between self-concept and idealized self-concept over a period of time should lead to lowered communication apprehension. Whether this change is brought about by skill enhancement, cognitive modification, or desensitization is unclear at this time and needs further clarification.

Self-Disclosure and Communication Apprehension

The obtained relationship between self-disclosure and communication apprehension both supported and extended our understanding of how an individual's perceived self-disclosures impact on communication apprehension. Along the lines of Hamilton (1972), significant negative correlations of about the same magnitude were obtained in this study to most self-disclosure dimensions. The only self-disclosure dimension not significantly correlated with communication apprehension was depth of generalized disclosiveness. In sum, the magnitude of correlation found here ($r = -.42$ to $r = -.15$ for significant correlations) approximates Hamilton's finding ($r = -.32$).

The differences found between high and low communication apprehensive subjects seem to follow those reported by McCroskey and Richmond (1977). McCroskey and Richmond's findings were basically replicated for targeted disclosiveness; all differences, with the exception of depth of disclosure, were significant with high communication apprehensive subjects reporting less disclosiveness than low communication apprehensive subjects. An extension of this line of research is found in the differences obtained between high and low communication apprehension subjects' generalized disclosiveness. Again, with the exception of depth of self-disclosure, high communication apprehensive subjects were less disclosive than low communication apprehensive subjects. Comparing the amount of variance explained by both measures, it would appear that the magnitude of differences is not very large. This follows closely the findings of McCroskey and Richmond and those of Hamilton. It is also reflected in the moderate to small correlations found between the various dimensions of both targeted and generalized disclosiveness and communication apprehension.

Adding the moderately communication apprehensive subjects to the self-disclosure analyses produced two results. First, although significant differences were found for all dimensions of self-disclosure, except depth of targeted and generalized disclosiveness, the magnitude of such differences was not generally large. This would seem to follow Powers and Smythe's (1980)

findings that, when compared to moderately communication apprehensive subjects, high communication apprehensive subjects are not as deviant as expected. Indeed, only for the generalized disclosiveness dimension of intent and the targeted disclosiveness dimension of honesty were high, moderate, and low communication apprehensive subjects significantly different from each other. On all other dimensions, except depth of disclosure for both targeted and generalized disclosiveness, the moderate communication apprehensive subjects were found not to differ from either the high or the low communication apprehensive subjects. Low and high communication apprehensive subjects did differ significantly on all but the depth dimensions.

These results suggest the relationship between communication apprehension and self-disclosure operates in approximately the same way as with self-concept. That is, the two are related (e.g., Jourard, 1971) and should be considered conjointly when dealing with communication apprehension in the classroom.[4]

Type of Basic Course and Communication Apprehension

Based on the results of this study it follows that a course in speech communication does affect high communication students. The results do not, however, suggest that any particular type of course is any more effective in reducing the high communication apprehsensive subject's fear or unwillingness toward communication. These results would tend to confirm those reported by Pearson and Yoder (1979) who expected but did not find differences in high communication apprehensive subjects' scores on the PRCA between public speaking and interpersonal communication courses. They suggest that one possible explanation might be the principle of regression toward the mean for an extreme population. The findings here suggest that this may not be so; each course, because of its potential cognitive modification, desensitization processes, and/or skills enhancement may prove to be equally effective in modifying the anxiety or fear held by the high communication apprehensive student. When the courses were probed this appeared to be the case: both the public speaking and the small group communication course produced significant change scores for apprehension--with lower scores upon completion of the course. The interpersonal course also produced lower scores at posttest but only approached significance ($p < .06$).

What may be the case, and this follows the findings of Pearson and Yoder, is that the highly communication apprehensive student perceives the courses as threatening to his or her perceived self-concept as a communicator and withdraws before any cognitive modification, desensitization, or skill enhancement is accomplished. Based on the number of communication apprehension students in the public speaking courses almost doubling those in the interpersonal communication courses, such an effect may have occurred.

Clearly, simply completing the basic speech communication course significantly reduced the amount of high communication apprehension in the sample. However, even after completing the course, communication apprehension scores were still over one standard deviation above the pretest mean for all subjects. It may be that more than one basic course is necessary to truely impact on the high communication apprehensive student.

If the type of basic speech communication course does not significantly differ in its effect one reducing communication apprehension, then perhaps we should examine what each does for the student enrolled in it. Based on the findings of Pearson and Yoder and Powers and Smythe, perhaps there is

something in each course that helps highly communication apprehensive students overcome at last partially their fears and anxieties about communicating. Perhaps the cross-situational aspects of communication apprehension needs much more attention. Based on the idea that perceived threat may force highly communication apprehensive students to withdraw from a course before it has a chance to impact, perhaps we should examine the situational aspects of apprehension prior to treatment. In institutions where choice is allowed, such an understanding might begin to reduce communication apprehension by channeling the student from less threatening to more threatening courses.

This study found that the three courses selected did produce different outcomes on communication apprehension-related variables. The basic course as a whole produced a significant reduction in communication apprehension scores from beginning to end of course. It also yielded more positiveness about self-disclosure from beginning to end and reduced the discrepancy between self-concept and ideal self-concept as a communicator. When examined as an "approach" to treating communication apprehension, each course impacted on subjects' perceptions of self-concept and self-disclosure. For the public speaking, or skills enhancement approach, high communication apprehensive subjects showed significant reduction in apprehension, more positiveness in their disclosures with targeted others, an increase in self-concept as a communicator, and a decrease in the discrepancy between communicator self-concept and idealized self-concept. For the interpersonal communication course, improvement was found in positiveness of self-disclosure for both targeted and generalized disclosiveness and a decrease in the discrepancy between communicator self-concept and idealized self-concept. Additionally, although only approaching significance, communication apprehension was reduced. Finally, in the small group discussion course, communication apprehension was significantly reduced and the perception of positiveness in self-disclosure was significantly increased toward targeted others.

Implications and Limitations

It would seem that there are several implications based on the findings of this research. First, the discrepancy between self-concept and idealized self-concept as a communicator should be explored in more detail. If the discrepancy between the two conceptualizations can be modified or reduced, communication apprehension might be reduced. Second, simply completing a basic speech communication course reduces the high communication apprehensive student's fear or anxiety toward communication. This finding would suggest that one of several different types of basic courses might be made available to the highly communication apprehensive student. Third, if situational differences in the perception of threat to self-concept can be further identified and examined for their impact on communication apprehension, then perhaps a series of courses might be used to desensitize the high communication apprehensive student. At institutions where neither faculty or facilities are avaliable, this approach to the problem might be both economical and productive. Finally, the relationship between high, moderate, and low communication apprehensive students needs further examination.

As with any piece of research there are limitations to this study. First, the course in small group discussion was represented by only one class due to problems in collection of posttest data at one university. Second, the method for assigning subjects to extreme classes of communication apprehension may not be extreme enough, as indicated by the impact of the moderately communication apprehensive subject (c.f., Powers and Smythe, 1980). Third, there is a need to examine the impact of the basic speech communication course

against communication apprehension programs. And, finally, no behavioral indices of apprehension or change were obtained. However, even with these limitations this study has expanded our knowledge of communication apprehension a little further. It has expanded what we know in the areas of self-concept and self-disclosure. It also has suggested that cross-situational aspects of communication apprehension need to be approached differently. Future research should expand upon these findings.

Notes

[1]Due to problems at one university in data collection, all subjects in the small group discussion course were lost at the posttest session. This limited the analyses which included small group subjects to only one university and one instructor.

[2]The Unwillingness to Communicate scale has a reported two-factor solution, approach-avoidance and reward (Burgoon, 1976). Correlations with the PRCA measure and reward, were nonsignificant. Because we were interested in cross-situational apprehension it was felt best to use the total Unwillingness score, which has a reported correlations with PRCA of .58.

[3]The PRCA instrument developed by McCroskey was not used due to questions of construct integrity and use in situations other than public speaking (Porter, 1981).

[4]Correlations between self-concept and self-disclosure were computed. Jourard's (1971) suggestion that the two variables are related was basically confirmed. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) were found for the generalized disclosiveness dimensions of intent ($r = .25$), amount ($r = .15$), positiveness ($r = .26$), and honesty ($r = .31$) for factor 1 of the self-concept measure. For factor 2, intent ($r = .29$), positiveness ($r = .21$), depth ($r = -.21$) and honesty ($r = .18$) were found. For targeted disclosiveness, significant correlations were found between factor 1 and intent ($r = .19$), positiveness ($r = .25$), and honesty ($r = .16$) for generalized disclosiveness and with honesty ($r = .21$) for targeted disclosiveness. No significant correlations were found on factor 2. The magnitude of these correlations suggest that while the two are related, the relationship is only moderate. The lack of significant correlations for ideal self-concept factors suggest that disclosure may be more closely related to perceptions of how an individual communicates and not so much how he or she would like to communicate.

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